

LEAN STRATEGY INCREASES THROUGHPUT AND CAPACITY

ABOUT PMI LLC. Processed Metals Innovators (PMI) is a fully integrated steel fabrication facility that provides high-quality, low-cost solutions by combining steel processing, stamping, and fabrication/assembly under one roof. Based in Bloomer, Wisconsin, the company fabricates metal parts for customers in the appliance and home improvement industries, as well as fire extinguisher enclosures, air compressors, generators, office furniture, and steel entry doors. PMI was established in 1990 and now has around 120 employees. The company offers a range of services, including steel blanking, slitting, metal stamping, laser cutting, turret/punch fabrication, robotic welding, and part assembly.

THE CHALLENGE. In the aftermath of an aggressive growth period, PMI recognized the need for further structure, effective inventory management, and improved efficiency throughout its operations. Company leaders contacted the UW-Stout Manufacturing Outreach Center (MOC), part of the MEP National Network™, for assistance in developing a culture of Lean practices.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. First, MOC project managers identified a Department of Defense Direct Supplier Assistance Grant to help fund their engagement with PMI. Next, they worked with all levels of the organization to identify opportunities for continuous improvement and develop a plan to increase efficiency.

PMI required coaching and support, and MOC provided workshops on Lean strategies that employees could immediately apply throughout the organization. The company implemented Lean improvements on a pilot welding project that reduced costs and saved hours of monthly production time. PMI staff gained insights from the workshops and developed a sharper awareness of opportunities to keep the Lean momentum rolling.

"Now we're so much better," observed PMI President Chris Conard, noting the impressive volume of work PMI handles efficiently. The company increased its overall production capacity and improved customer service. "The structure connects us," said Conard, "and Lean certainly helps us get through it."

"The UW-Stout Manufacturing Outreach Center let us get there at our own pace, following our own schedule. Now we work for the day rather than trying to get ahead, and the magic of Lean has cleaned up our processes significantly."

-Chris Conard, President

RESULTS



20% increase in production capacity



\$80,000 in annual cost savings from pilot welding project



Saved 20 hours monthly production time on pilot welding project

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